Progressive Studies

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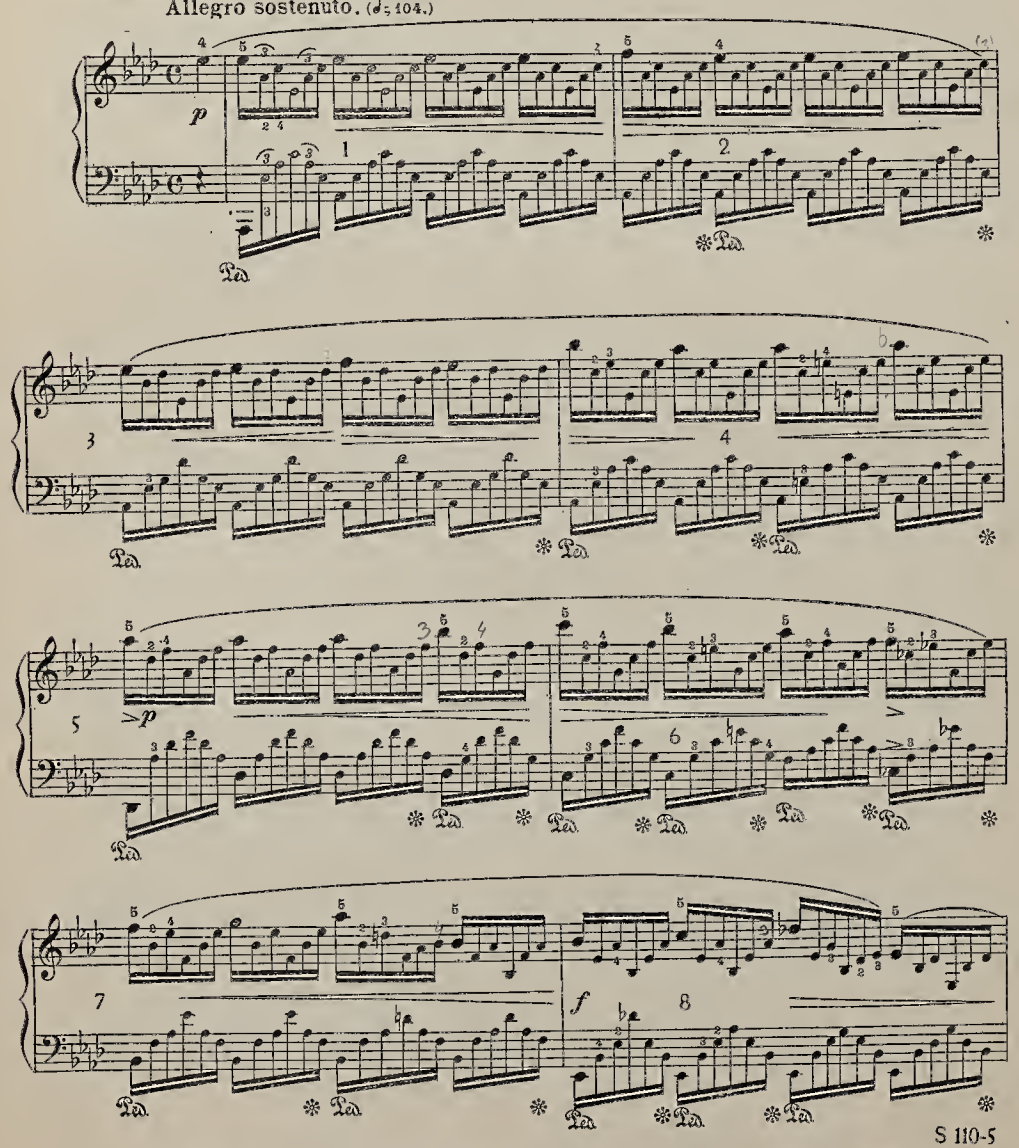
Etude.

F. CHOPIN, Op. 25, №1.

Edited and Annotated by Frederic Lillebridge.

Allegro sostenuto. (♩= 104.)



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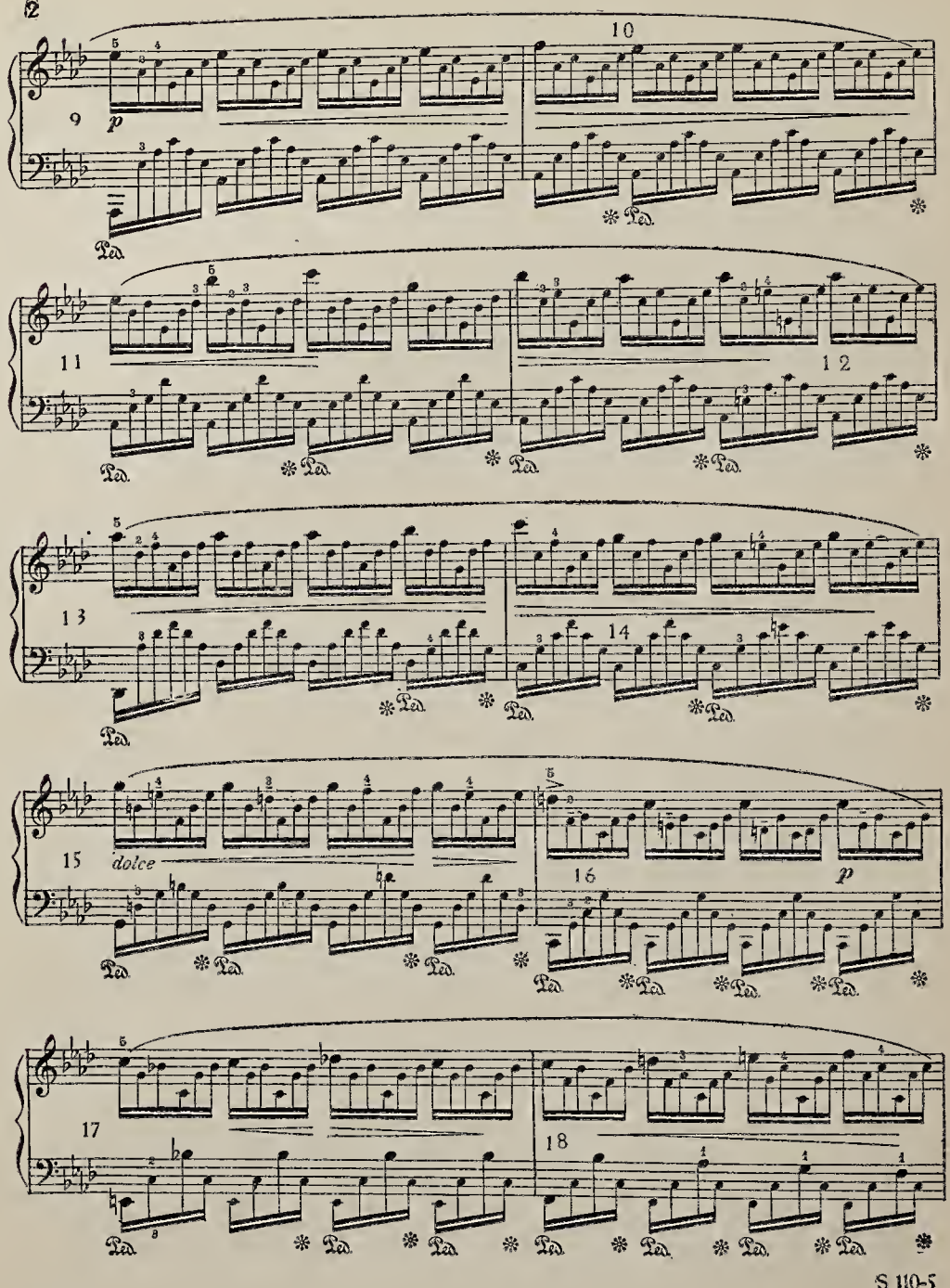
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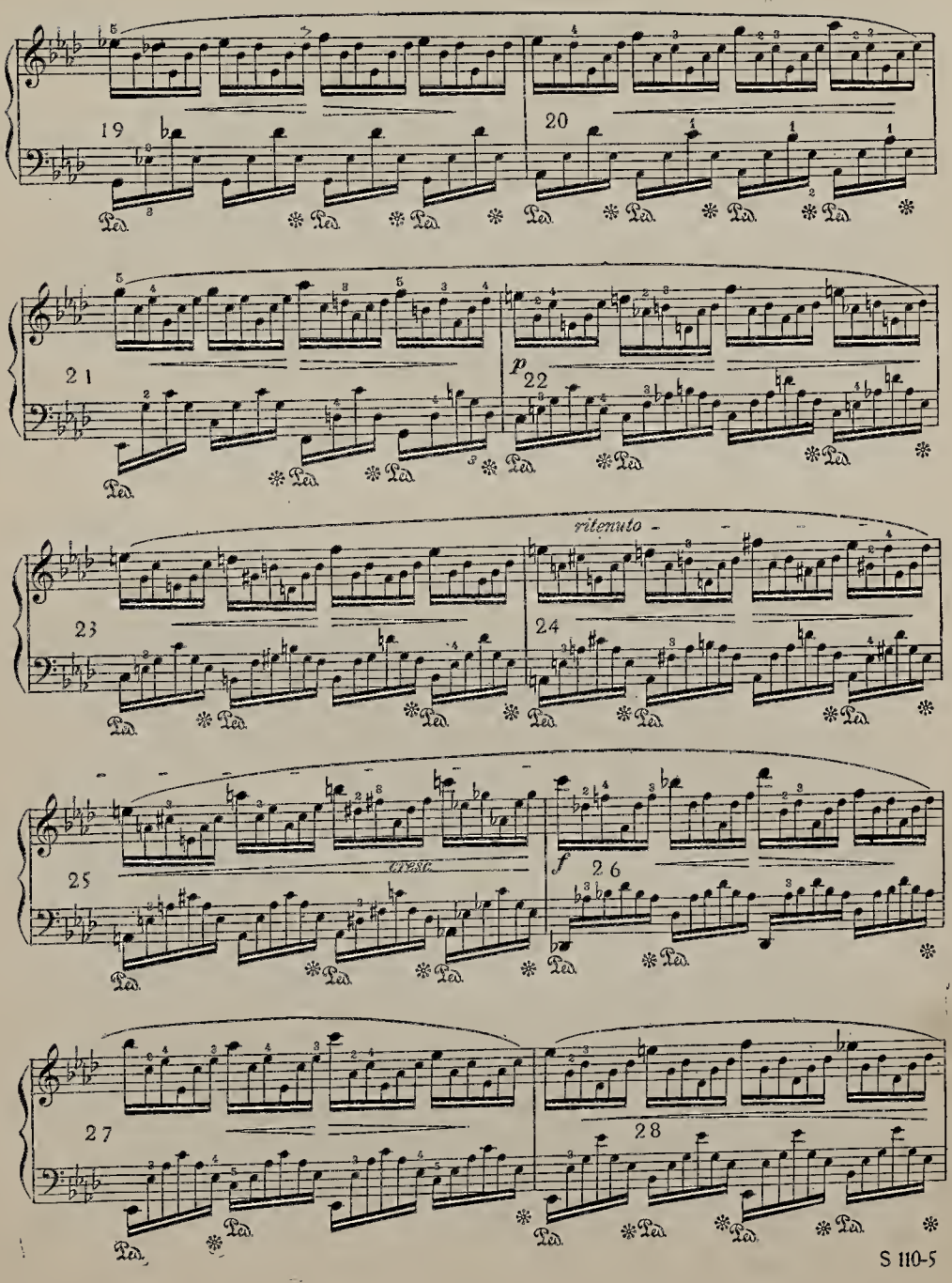
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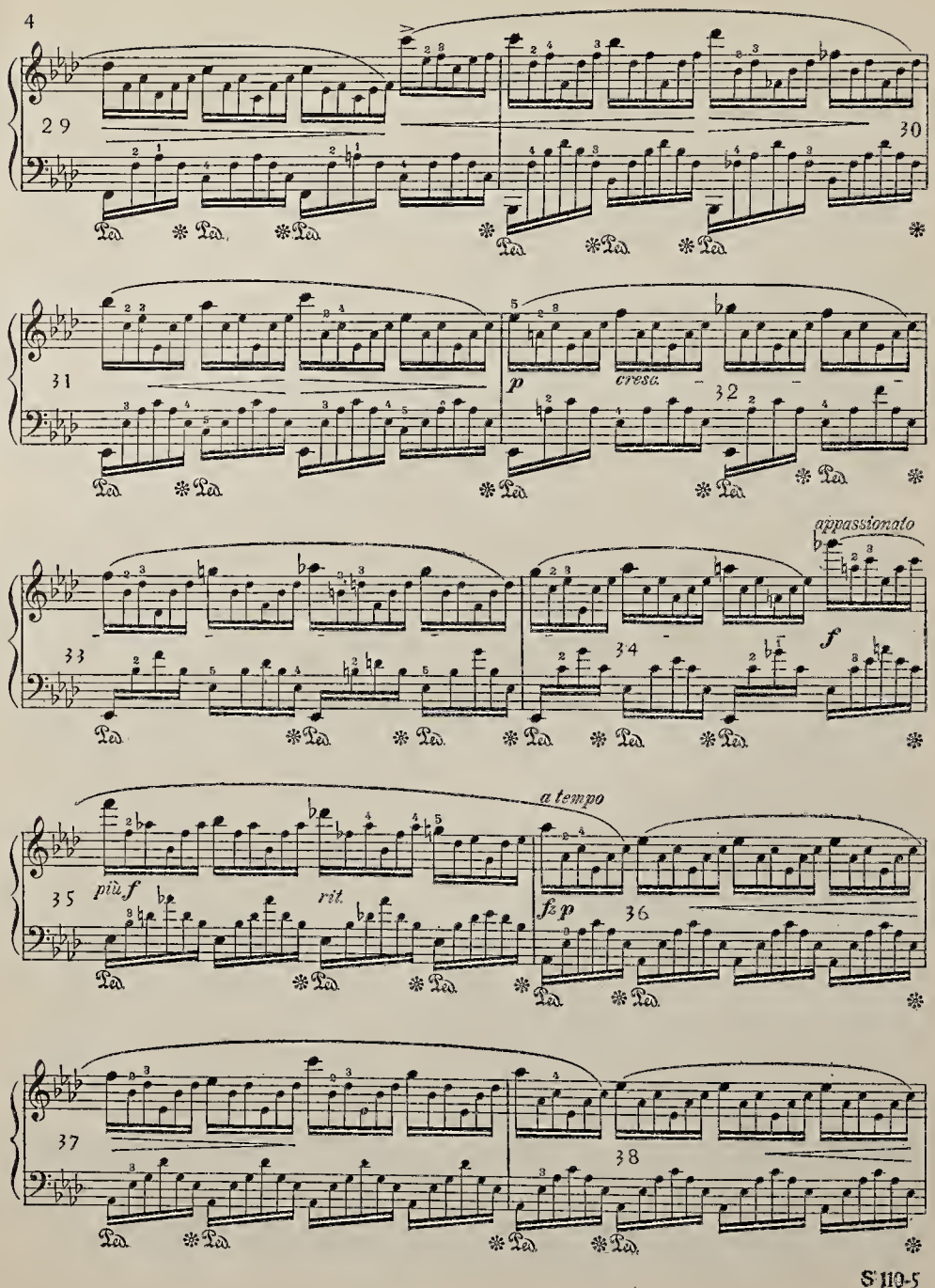
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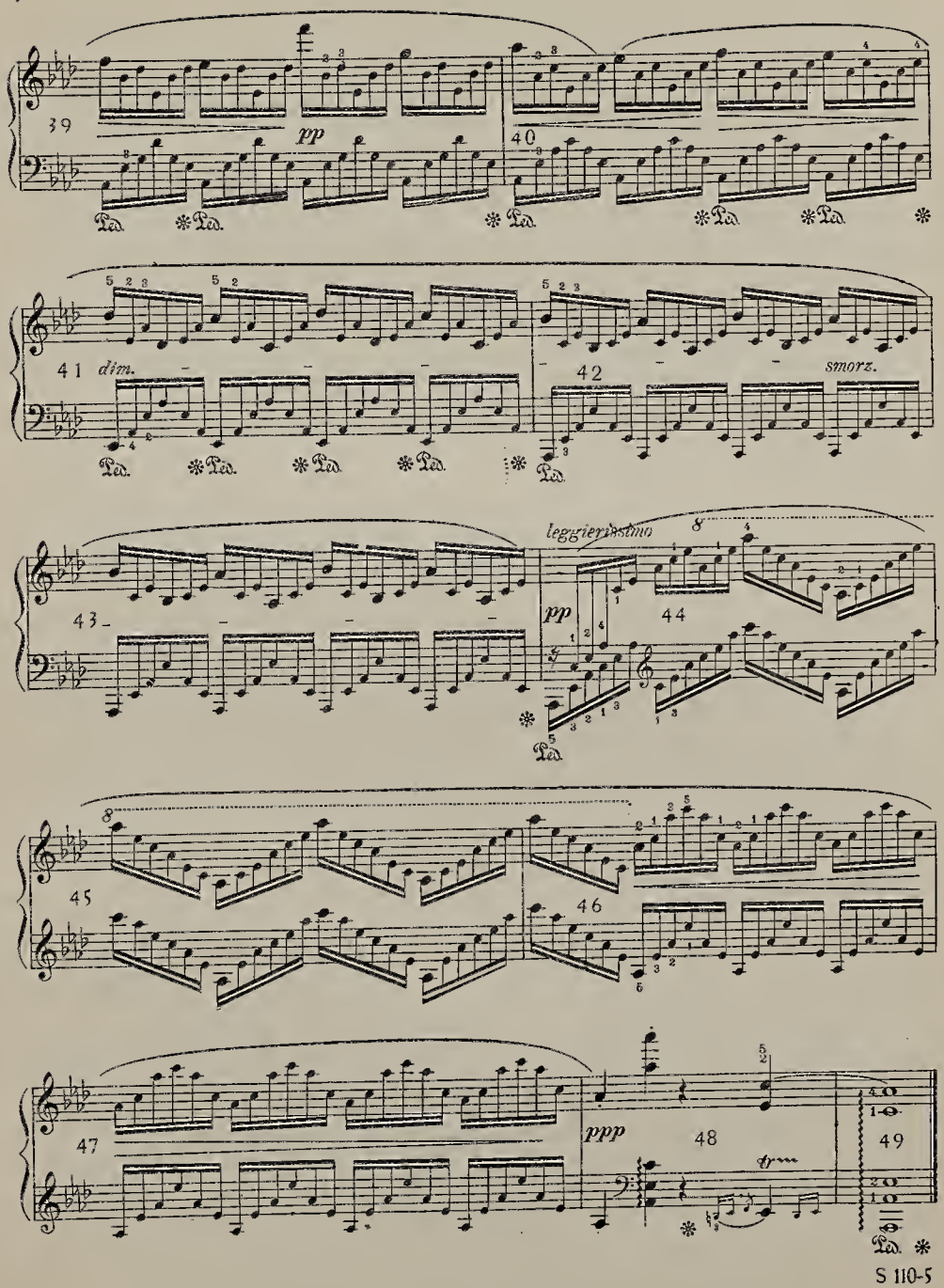
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ANNOTATION.

STUDY IN A FLAT, Op. 25, No. 1. CHOPIN.

Robert Schumann, in writing of the present *etude* said: "Imagine that an aeolian harp possessed all the musical scales, and that the hand of an artist were to cause them all to intermingle in all sorts of fantastic embellishments, yet in such a way as to leave everywhere audible a deep fundamental tone and a soft continuously, singing upper voice, and you will get about the right idea of his playing. But it would be an error to think that Chopin permitted every one of the small notes to be distinctly heard. It was rather an undulation of the A♭ major chord, here and there thrown aloft anew by the pedal. Throughout all the harmonies one always heard in great tones a wondrous melody, while once only, in the middle of a piece, besides that chief song, a tenor voice became prominent in the midst of the chords. After hearing the *etude* a feeling came over one as of having seen in a dream a beatific picture which, when already half awake, one would gladly once more recall."

The notes printed in large type are to be brought out more strongly than the others. The piece should first be studied with a view of understanding its harmonic structure. In other words, analyze the chords, see how they are broken, see whether they contain any harmonic ornaments, and notice any other features in regard to the harmony. This piece might also be analyzed with reference to its formal contents, which would be instructive and interesting. The figure throughout the piece should be regarded as a double triplet, and not as three times two.

The little melody in measure 15, in the middle part, E, D, F, E, should be brought out somewhat stronger than the upper part, G. The melody in the left hand part of measures 18 to 20 might be played *forte* followed by a *decrescendo*, while the right hand melody might be played commencing softly, then *crescendo* to *forte*.

The use of the pedal in this piece is of great importance. It has been carefully marked. You will remember that the pedal cannot follow a melody note in such a case as that indicated in measure 2, where the melody note is F followed by E♭. Although the harmony remains the same, still the pedal would blur the outline of the melody. Consequently, we have to release the pedal after the first beat, and take it up again for the succeeding beats of the measure. In measure 3, where there is a change of harmony, a change of pedal is required. The same way with measure 4. It would be better to divide the pedal between the first and second beats rather than to carry it over without interruption. Make use of the pedal simply to connect the two notes of the melody.

Recitation.

1. Why is the pedal interrupted before the second beat of measure 2?
   Ans.

2. How are the groups in this piece divided?
   Ans.

3. What was Schumann's opinion of this composition?
   Ans.

4. What was the effect that Chopin's own playing of this piece produced?
   Ans.

5. Explain the hidden melody in measure 15; that is, how it should be played.
   Ans.

For Teacher's Record

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